Hon. D. L. Swain

Nov. 14, 51

Spirit of the Age.

A FAMILY NEWSPAPER—DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, MORALITY, LITERATURE, AGRICULTURE, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

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Original Papers.

Written for the Spirit of the Age.

HOW PHILIP S. WHITE BROKE UP BROADSIDE'S GROG-SHOP.

In D—— county, were two young gentlemen of respectability and influence, (by these terms I mean to convey the idea that they were wealthy) who from their infancy had been inseparable companions, attributable, perhaps, to the fact, that on no two points did their dispositions agree, except one, both were extremely fond of the bottle. So great was their attachment, that scarcely two days could pass without seeing each other; and being of an extremely fashionable cast, they of course could not meet of an evening to spend an hour in social converse, without that "*sine qua non*," a bottle of wine or brandy.

It happened that a Division of the Sons of Temperance had been organized within three miles of where our two friends lived; an organization which they held in supreme contempt; in fact they looked on temperance as a very ridiculous affair. The members of this Division very strangely took it into their heads that by having a temperance celebration, and getting Philip S. White to deliver one of his stiring addresses, it might have the effect of entrapping some persons into their society who had hitherto stood aloof. This far-fetched idea, notwithstanding its utter injustice, was brought before the Division, and carried almost unanimously. After writing to the Grand Scribe, they were informed that Bro. White would speak for them on the —— day of February. Accordingly, the Sons spread the news that on the —— of February they would have a 'march' and Philip S. White would address the assemblage on the important subject of temperance. The news of this address excited the country around very much, but as on all other topics, different people had different opinions. Some said it was only a plan to show off their unmeaning 'badges,' and make a parade, thereby making themselves ridiculous in the extreme. Others thought that the Sons were close run for money and this was a plan to replenish their impoverished treasury, adding that such parades could be productive of no good and should be discountenanced; and old Broadsides, the grog seller, would shake his head very mysteriously, and wish the day would be one of excessive rain, snow, or in fact anything else, that would cause the Sons to be disappointed. Many of the opposers were satisfied that Broadside's wish would be verified inasmuch as he was a christian of the order of 'Primitive Baptists,' and no doubt led them to belive his piety was sufficient to make any wish he might express come to pass without doubt. Now, it must be confessed that Broadsides was a little fearful of the consequences of White's address, so he told each of his customers, (confidentially) that if they would call on the morning of the celebration, they would take a social drink together, on *free* terms, that is, Broadsides was to treat. In consideration of Broadside's treating, being like the blossoming of the Aloes, but once in an hundred years, each toper felt himself called on by every inch of patriotism he possessed, to call by on that morning and drink as long as Broadsides would treat, so as to be in a fit condition to baffle successfully the arguments of those who might be ignorant enough to suppose intemperance an evil, as said White had affirmed it to be, in an address he had previously delivered at the county seat, a few months before.

Our two friends, of whom I spoke at the beginning, also had a meeting of a strictly private nature, seeing they admitted no one but a quart 'TICKLER,' filled to the throat with peach brandy, four years old, but which was really destined to be nearly as old as it would ever get, as our friends held in contempt a dram of less dimensions than half a pint, and repeated at intervals of thirty minutes.

Our friends, (whom I shall name Walter and Edmond, whilst I keep their real names behind the curtain) had very wisely talked over their own most important affairs, and the affairs of their country, in the beginning of the evening, and as the clock very innocently warned them that it was but an hour to midnight, they very naturally turned their thoughts to the object of their meeting, which was to consider whether or not they should go to the celebration, which was now but two days off. But Walter, from some cause, either the weakness of his head, the strength of the potation, the quantity he had imbibed, or something of the sort, had arrived at that peculiar state of mind, more minutely described in David Copperfield, in which he showed his utter abhorrence of dividing sentences into words, and as he was a thick-tongued individual any how, it did not seem to enhance his intelligibility in the least.

Says Edmond, rising to depart, 'what (hic) do you say, old buck, (hic) do you intend (hic) going to the (hic) celebration?

Walter replied by saying, 'Ispozerlefter,' which, by giving a pretty extended stretch to the imagination, might be translated into 'I suppose I'll have to.'

'I'll meet you,' says Edmond, 'at Uncle John's, very early. Good night."

At this very interesting point of conversation, Edmond left the room, and Walter rose to see his friend out, which laudable intention he would doubtless have carried into effect (notwitstanding Edmond had been gone some seconds) had not his foot struck a chair which caused the floor to rear up and strike him in the face, at which he became very indignant, but saw nothing which could have offered the insult, until turning round he discovered at the back of his bed, the object, as he imagined, by which the insult had been offered. He started with rage at his antagonist, without noticing that the bed was in his way, over which he fell, and as he did so grasped his overcoat, which he imagined was the man who offered him such a base indignity, and proceeded to inflict a series of well aimed blows, swearing that he would tear him to pieces, which threat he actually carried into immediate execution, to his own entire satisfaction. Satisfied with having totally demolished his enemy, he quietly resigned himself to the arms of Morpheus.

Edmond, whose home was half a mile distant, started thither full of pleasant thoughts as to the pleasure he should have of going with Uncle John's daughters to the celebration, with the eldest of whom he was in love, and certain prattling people in the neighborhood said he was addressing. Edmond, it must be admitted, was a little vain that night, for he was thinking how little influence liquor had over him; that although he himself could tell when his head was getting light, yet nobody else could ever tell by his actions that he had tasted liquor; he then thought how cleverly he would fool the old folks, by slipping to bed without making any noise, &c. But whilst he was in this pleasing train of thought, all at once he came to a large level old field of about ten acres, beautifully covered over with broom-straw; and as the gentle breeze blew softly over it, causing it to wave most brightly in the moonlight, he very naturally took it to be a large mill pond! How it came there, he could not account, nor did he try. He saw it there, and like a true philosopher, determined to swim over it. So without hesitation, he stripped off, entered the water, and swam to the other side like a duck. On reaching land, however, without thinking of his clothing, he struck out for home, and in a short time reached home, as he supposed, but which really was Uncle John's residence. He bolted into the cook kitchen, which he very innocemtly mistook for his own room, and after fumbling about for his bed for some time, he stretched himself out on the table, muttering something about some body always wallowing on his bed in daylight, so as to have it as hard as a plank at night. Then without further ceremony he endeavored to sleep, thinking how cleverly he had managed to get to bed without waking the old folks. And here I must do him the justice to say that in this respect he managed admirably, for not a single person on the hill knew his being there until next morning, when the cook-maid went into the kitchen to build a fire preparatory to getting breakfast, when by the light of the fire, she saw, on turning round, a man lying on the table naked, whom she imagined to have been murdered and brought there by the perpetrator of the deed, for the purpose of throwing suspicion into the wrong channel. She uttered a scream, and at one bound cleared the kitchen door and ran to communicate the alarming intelligence to the white people. The family who were early risers were already up, and instantly repaired to the kitchen to see the poor unfortunate man who had met so hard a fate. The old gentleman going before, hastily seized a tablecloth and threw it over the murdered man, just before the rest came in.

There they all stood around, looking on him, expressing in decided terms their pity and astonishment. See, said Uncle John, he has certainly been strangled; the violent contortions of his countenance prove it, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The only reply to this observation was an involuntary shudder, and all again was silence. Each person seemed lost in mute astonishment, as they gazed on the corpse. Whether it was the mesmeric influence exerted on him or not, we are unable to say, but Uncle John had just concluded his remarks, when *horribile dictu!* up rose the murdered man, and sat upright in bed.—The ladies shrieked and rushed out of the room with all possible dispatch. Our poor friend looked wildly around; he asked what such proceedings meant? His breath answered the interrogatory; for a cask that had contained brandy for the last forty years would not have smelt stronger.

After a brief conversation which it is hardly necessary to give in detail, Uncle John clearly felt it to be his duty to say something to the young man, in regard to his intemperate course. Edmond, says he, frequently have I seen the victims of intemperance in a condition calculated to pain the hearts of their friends, but the present instance is one of the most heart rending scenes I have ever witnessed; indeed, I can scarce believe my own senses. I have frequently heard of your intemperate habits, but never once thought you had so far thrown yourself away. Here you are, after a nights' debauch, in a perfect state of nudity.

Edmond looked wildly at himself, as he for the first time became conscious of his condition, and the blush of shame which then mantled his cheeks was productive of more remorse, than any pleasure derived from drinking. 'I'll drink no more,' said he firmly. Promise me, said he to Uncle John, that this adventure shall never be told.

It shall never be told so long as you keep your promise; said Uncle John, sternly.

Edmond dressed in a suit of clothes profered by Uncle John's eldest son and walked off pretty much as a condemned criminal rides to the gallows to be executed.

At length the day arrived for the speaking, which called together a large assemblage. When Philip S. White rose all was breathless silence. His deep voice rang through the crowd, whose eager ears were bent lest they should lose a word. He painted the drunkard's danger, and the moderate drinkers danger so plainly, that they saw it. One moment the whole audience would be in tears, the next convulsed with laughter;—and thus he swayed the audience at will for two hours, though it seemed but a few minutes, so completely did they feast on his eloquence. He closed by inviting those who were desirious to give in their names for initiation, to do so. The Sons now became very active among their friends.

Old Broadsides thought this last act very ridiculous, and was consoling himself with the thought that nobody would join, when,

'Edmond D———,' cried an individual in the perfect similitude of Uncle John, and Philip S. White proceeded to write down the name.

'That won't do,' ejaculated Broadsides, 'he is my best customer.'

'Walter M——,' shouted some one else.

'Oh!' said Broadsides, as if in pain, and he stared around very widely as he thought of the two good customers he had lost.

'Henry Walton,' cried a third.

'Thomas Bartlett,' cried a fourth.

'John Jones,' cried a fifth.

'Curse it, curse it,' said Broadsides.

'James Stephens, John King, Samuel Davis, Harvey Smith, William Moore, David Sneed,' sung out the Sons, in all directions.

'I'm ruined, I'm ruined,' exclaimed Old Broadsides; which remarkable observation was absolutely true, so far as selling liquor was concerned; for the Sons continued to call out names until forty one was called, all of them, or at least most of them liquor drinkers. Philip S. White's address was a death blow to Broadsides' grog-shop, which had been a pest to the order-loving citizens for years.

CALDWELL.

Choice Literature.

THE LICENSE SYSTEM.

BY REV. J. T. CRANE, M. A.

Principal of N. J. Conference Seminary.

We call this the 'Age of Improvement.' And we say well, for so it is. Almost all nations, indeed, boast over some misty tradition of a time when the world was brighter, and man more happy than at present. But unless we refer these traditions to man in Eden, we are unable to give them any tangible shape.—Not even the poet, his eyes in fine frenzy rolling, can give these airy nothings a local habitation and a name. The mind may glance lovingly back upon the 'Good old times:' but when we would define the precise era, B. C. or A. D., when the said period was in the brightness of its glory, we are at fault.

If we refer to our fathers, the Saxons, we find them a race of savages, who bowed before Thor the Thunderer, and Wodin the Conquerer. With a warrior's fierce joy, they looked, at death, for a warrior's heaven, and hoped to quaff mead with the heroes in Valhalla. We may talk of the latter days of Bluff Harry, but England was then only half-civilized. The reign of 'Good Queen Bess,' has also been pointed out as a very blissful age; but at that time, barbarous manners and customs prevailed, and even the august Elizabeth herself could storm and swear, when tipsey,—an amiable weakness to which her majesty was somewhat given. And in our own land the blessed period was not in the days of the border wars, when the settler, a dozen times a day, put his hand to his head to be sure that his scalp was still there; nor in the days of Salem superstition, when many a wise man declared himself shot by a witch with a broomstick.

But with all our progress, we have not yet arrived at perfection. In the various departments of human advancement, while some have apparently arrived at the highest attainable point, others hardly begin to feel the quickening spirit of the age. Our civilization, like our beloved America, presents a very irregular surface; and while the mountain peaks are exulting in the joyous beams of the coming day, here and there a deep ravine is found around which gloomy shadows are yet hovering, where the owl and the bat are still abroad, and the night shade is filled with dew.

But it becomes us no doubt, to vote this a very great age. The 'March of Improvement,' is performed in double quick time. Improvement, in fact, seems to have borrowed the marvellous seven leagues' boots of the renowned Slayer of Giants. But then, as might naturally be expected, it occasionally strides over a seven leagues' interval without once touching it.

This, to some extent, at least, has been the fate of the laws regulating the liquor traffic. Our legislators evidently thought the sale of ardent spirits dangerous to the community, and considered themselves in duty bound to watch it narrowly.

They saw the ravages of alcohol. Like the line of retreat of Bonaparte's Grand Army from the inhospitable land of snows, its path could be marked by the blackening corpses strewn along. They saw manhood's strong frame bow beneath its touch. They beheld the fond hopes of parents perish, and the gray hairs of age go down with sorrow to the grave. They saw wives made widows, and little innocent children, made orphans, by alcohol. They knew that hearts were bleeding and tears were falling evermore; and that, by it, from many a once happy hearth, every hope, and every joy had fled. The record was like the scroll which the prophet saw in his sad vision; it was written within and without, and full of lamentation, and mourning, and woe. The dispenser of village charities found that most of the wretchedness which he sought to alleviate originated in the love of strong drink. The statesman saw this terrible curse eating like an ulcer, into the very heart of the nation. The managers of the abodes of pauperism saw most of their wards crowded with drunkard's families. The magistrate in most of the criminals dragged before him, recognized the victims of alcohol. The sheriff seldom adjusted his fatal rope, except around throats long familiar with its use. The coroner held most of his inquests over these disfigured bodies, found in the highways or drawn ashore in the nets of fishermen. No age, no station, was safe. The great statesman, and the great soldier, as well as men of lower degree, were conquered by their appetites, and 'died as the fool dieth.'

The judge from the bench, and the divine from the pulpit, fell into the dishonored grave of the drunkard: and in this deep abyss, some of the brightest lights of the age were quenched.

The evil, too, threatened to increase, rather than diminish. The laborer took alcohol with him to his field of toil.—When the crisis of the suit came, the lawyer resorted to brandy to spur up his jaded powers. With it, the poet plumed his wings for loftier flights. And even the doctor of divinity fancied that a little wine imparted additional pathos and unction to his eloquence. When a child was born, the friends of the family gathered to the christening and drank. If he lived to legal majority they assembled and drank again. If he called to see the ladies, an invitation to the side board was as indispensable as the small talk. If he married, his wedding was a scene of revelry, in which intoxicating liquors flowed in copious streams. If he died, his relatives and friends congregated at his funeral, and sought, with alcohol, to reimburse themselves for the tears which they shed upon his coffin.

In searching for the head-quarters of the evil, our legislators, very naturally fixed their eyes upon the places where intoxicating liquors were retailed. Hither the small politician came to learn the news, and display his wisdom and eloquence. Hither the lounger took his listless way, in hope of finding something to enable him to forget the slow moving hours. Here reckless young men congregated to hold their revels, and the village tavern became the rendezvous of idleness, dissipation and riot.

The convictions of the law makers impelled them to attempt something to remedy these evils; and then arose the question, 'What shall we do? Shut up the places of sale? Impossible! What would the poor traveller do, especially if his journey happened to be either long or short; or if the weather should chance to be cold, or hot, or wet, or dry? Besides great as the evil confessedly is, it cannot be done away all at once. We must be content to *regulate*.' Regulation therefore, became the motto of the law. And our economists had before them, a most notable and worthy example. The sages who governed the city of London, some centuries since saw the evils resulting from the gross licentiousness of the times, and felt constrained to do something to abate the wickedness. The magnitude of the evil was such, however, that to attempt its entire destruction seemed worthy only of the chivalrous knight of La Mancha. Would the rulers be so unwise as to attempt impossibilities? Certainly not; what could they then do? *Regulate*; and therefore they set about regulating the overt sins of a great city. All things were reduced to system by the sage lawgivers; ordinances were devised for the haunts of wickedness, and their fallen inmates. And that it might be under the supervision of those who were best calculated to deal with sin, the whole matter was committed to the pious care of the *Bishop of Winchester*.

With this admirable model to assist them, our wise men commenced their labors, and finally produced the license system. The trade in alcoholic drinks was thenceforth to be harmless. The vender, the buyer, and the place of sale were hedged about with all manner of cunningly devised safeguards and defences. 'At least twelve reputable freeholders' must give a formal certificate that the proposed Inn or tavern is necessary and will conduce to the public good.'—The applicant must also be certified to be 'of good repute for temperance and honesty.' Moreover, he is required to give bonds for his good behavior, as if he were already suspected of crimnal designs, and to crown all, as they had lamentable proof of the fact that men placed in close proximity to alcohol, were liable to sudden backslidings from good morals, they ordained that the license should be valid only one year, at the close of which the whole process must be repeated, or the sale abandoned. A multitude of regulations was devised to make the traffic as little injurious as possible. But all this provident care was vain. It was no wiser than the caution of the cunning Hibernian, who in firing the cannon, thought to moderate the explosion by 'touching it off easy.' The lawmakers were not satisfied with the practical results of their own handiwork; and soon 'an act to alter and amend' was added. And then supplement upon suplement, and 'further supplements' still, were concocted to supply that which was lacking. And now for some years past, at almost every meeting of the Legislature, the wearisome subject is dragged up, and efforts are made to mend that which former legislators have failed to make satisfactory.

It is not without reason, then, that we look upon the license system as a failure in legislation. The serious part of the community are not satisfied with its morality. It does not even meet the expectations of those who framed it. The tide of death sweeps on, despite the puny barriers which they would fain throw across the channel. Some of the reasons for this failure are obvious. An essential part of the law depends for its effect upon certain matters which are in their very nature intangible, and consequently unavailable. The twelve signers of the recommendation for instance, must be 'reputable freeholders.' But who is a legally reputable man? The law nowhere defines it good reputation; nor can it be done so that the judges can decide, in a moment, whether those whose names are appended to the paper before them, come up to the true standard. We can easily point out the extreme cases. We can show that Washington, or Dwight, or Fisk, was a reputable man, and that a convicted robber or swindler, is not. But who can draw the line which will define clearly the position of every man in a large community? If one should attempt it, another would declare the standard too high or too low, and wish it adjusted to his own notions, and both, in applying their own rules, would find a multitude of cases which it would puzzle them sore to decide. In a task like this even he would have failed who—

'Could divide
'A hair twixt south and southwest side.'

And thus, from the vagueness of the terms employed, this part of the law has been rendered almost wholly powerless. Any freeholder out of the State prison, may consider himself sufficiently 'reputable' for this purpose. The law, as applied, demands neither intelligence, nor sense, nor virtue. When the Jewish monarch had made his immense laver for the temple, he cast twelve oxen of brass, and placed them beneath it, as its supporters. And so with our modern Solomons; they are not willing that the traffic in alcohol shall stand upon its own bottom. They must needs mount their poisoned caldron upon the backs of twelve beasts of burden; but they do not seem to care whether their animals are roaring 'bulls of Bashan,' or the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream.

[*To be Continued.*]

PAYING AN OLD DEBT.

A TRUE NARRATIVE, WITH A MORAL.

A merchant very extensively engaged in commerce, in our Atlantic cities, died intestate, Febuary 18, 18—, at the age of 75. After his death, among his papers a package of very considerable size was found, carefully tied up and labelled as follows:

"Notes, due bills, and accounts, against sundry persons down along shore. Some of these may be got by suit or severe dunning. But the people are poor; most of them have fisherman's luck. My children will do as they think best. Perhaps they will think with me, that it is best to burn the package entirely.'

About a month after he died, the sons met together, when the elder brother, the administrator, produced this package, read the superscription, and asked what course should be taken in regard to it.—Another brother, a few years younger than the eldest, a man of strong impulsive temperament, unable at the moment to express his feeling by words, while he brushed the tears from his eyes with one hand, by a spasmodic jerk of the other towards the fire-place indicated his wish to have the package put into the flames. It was suggested by another of the brothers, that it might be well first to make a list of the debtor's names, and of the dates and amounts, that they might be enabled, as the intended discharge was for all, to inform such as might offer payment, that their debts were forgiven. On the following day they again assembled, the list had been prepared, and all the notes, due bills, and accounts, the amount of which including interest, amounted to $30,000, were committed to the flames.

It was about four months after our fathers death, continued my informant, in the month of June, that I was sitting in my eldest brother's counting room, waiting for an opportunity to speak with him, there came in a hard favored, little old man, who looked as though time and rough usage had been to windward of him for seventy years. He asked me if my brother was not the executor. My brother answered that he was the administrator, as our father died intestate.

"Well," said the stranger, "I've come up from the Cape to pay a debt I owed the old gentleman."

My brother requested him to take a seat, being at the moment engaged with other persons at the desk. The old man sat down, and putting on his glasses, drew out a very ancient pocket book and began to count out his money. When he had finished, as he sat waiting his turn, slowly twirling his thumbs with his old, grey, meditative eyes cast down upon the floor, he sighed, and I knew the money, as the phrase runs, came hard, and secretly wished the old man's name might be found on the forgiving list. My brother was soon at leisure, and asked him his name, residence, &c. The original debt was $440; it had stood a long time, and with the interest, amounted to between 7 and 800. My brother went to his desk, and after examining the forgiving list attentively, a sudden smile lighted up his countenance, and told me the truth at once. The old man's name is there. My brother quietly took a seat by his side, and a conversation occurred between them which I shall never forget.

'Your note is outlawed,' said he, 'it is dated 12 years ago, payable in two years; there's no witness, and no interest has ever been paid; you are not bound to pay this note; we can never recover the amount.'

'Sir,' said the old man 'I wish to pay it. It is the only heavy debt I have in the world. It may be outlawed here, but I have no child, and my old woman and I hope we have made our peace with God, and I wish to do so with man.—I should like to pay it.' And he laid his bank notes before my brother, requesting him to count them over.

'I cannot take this money,' said my brother.

The old man became alarmed. 'I have cast simple interest for 12 years, and a little over,' said he. I will pay you compound interest, if you require it; the debt ought to have been paid long ago, but your father was very indulgent; he knew that I had been unlucky, and told me not to worry about it.'

My brother then sat the whole matter before him, and taking the bank bills, returned them to the old man's pocket book, telling him that, although our father never left no formal will, he had recommended to his children to destroy certain notes, due bills, and other evidences of debt, and release those who might be legally bound to pay them.

For a moment the worthy old man appeared to be stupefied. After he had recollected himself, and wiped a few tears from his eyes, he said: 'From the time I heard of your father's death, I have raked, and scraped, and pinched to get the money together for the payment of this debt. About ten days ago I had made up the sum to within $20. My wife knew how much the payment of this debt lay on my spirits, and advised me to sell a cow, and make up the difference, and get the heavy burden off my mind. I did so; and now what will my old woman say? I must get back to the Cape and tell her this good news. She'll probably repeat the very words she used when she put her hands on my shoulders as we parted—'I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging their bread.' Giving each of us a hearty shake of the hand, and a blessing upon our old father's memory, he went on his way rejoicing.

'There,' said my brother, 'your part of the amount would be so much. Contrive a plan to convey to me your share of pleasure derived from this operation, and the money is at your service.'

Such is the simple tale which I have told as it was told to me. To add the evident moral, would be an insult to the reader.

THE AMERICAN TEMPERANCE MAGAZINE FOR NOVEMBER.—This number contains two fine engravings of Philip S. White and Hon. C. N. Olds, of Ohio, with biographical notices. The articles for the month are furnished by Geo. F. Cheever, Mrs. G. Abell, Rev. P. P. Neely, Alice Carey. Wm. R. Stacy, E. C. Delavan, Judge Dillahunty, Christian Keener, Dr. Nott and Dr. Barnes.

What has become of the October No.? It has not been received by the subscribers in this State, so far as we have learned.

ED. AGE.

Anti-Fugitive Law Repeal.—The Judiciary Committee in the Vermont House of Representatives have reported in favor of the repeal of the obnoxious part of the habaes corpus act of the last session.